



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

FEB 28 2003

The Honorable John Conyers
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Conyers:

Thank you for your letter of September 27, 2002, to President George W. Bush, co-signed by 40 other Members of Congress, regarding the effect that the events of September 11, 2001, have had on the United States Refugee Resettlement Program (USRP). In your letter, you urge the President to admit at least 100,000 refugees in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003. I appreciate your concern over and continued support of the refugee resettlement program, and I assure you that the United States remains steadfastly committed to our humanitarian mandate of providing protection for refugees. A separate response will be forwarded to the other co-signers of this letter.

Certainly, the terrorist attacks on America have impacted the operation of the USRP. As you may know, the ceiling of 70,000 refugee admissions in FY 2002 was not met. Actual refugee admissions totaled approximately 27,000. Refugee processing activities and circuit rides abroad were curtailed until security enhancements for the refugee program were reviewed and developed, guaranteeing not only the safety of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officials abroad but our overall national security as well. Following approval by the Homeland Security Council in November 2001, these heightened security measures were adopted. On November 21, 2001, the President signed the FY 2002 Presidential Determination, permitting the admission of arriving refugees once again.

On October 16, 2002, the President signed the FY 2003 Presidential Determination, directing that up to 70,000 refugees be admitted to the United States during FY 2003.

During FY 2002, the need to address a range of security concerns undeniably resulted in significant processing delays, but throughout this difficult period, the refugee program partners worked steadily to ensure that refugee processing activities resumed as quickly and smoothly as possible. In FY 2002, INS officers traveled to more than 20 refugee processing locations in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In addition, in an effort to increase the number of adjudicators available for overseas refugee processing details, the INS conducted refugee training

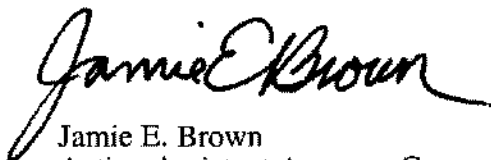
In order to expand the pool of refugee applicants eligible for interviews, the INS was working vigorously with its program partners to identify creative ways to increase access to the USRP. Within the Administration, a task force on refugee admissions was established and is examining a wide range of possible new priority 2 designations and also ways in which resources from the non-governmental organizations community may be used to augment the refugee referral process.

Currently, seven international airports—Atlanta, New York, Newark, Orlando, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami—are inspecting refugees. New security enhancements require that all arriving refugees 14 years of age and older be fingerprinted by the INS at Ports-of-Entry (POEs) until such time as approved refugees can be fingerprinted overseas. Lack of processing space and safety concerns at our airports have necessitated our imposing a limit of 35 refugees arriving on each flight. There is no restriction on the number of flights carrying refugees that may arrive on a daily basis. As more refugees are fingerprinted overseas, we will review the need to limit numbers of refugee arrivals per flight.

The INS is currently working toward establishing more POEs in order to accommodate additional refugee processing. We have been working closely on this issue with the Department of State, the International Organization for Migration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the United States Public Health Service. We are optimistic that we will find solutions that will allow increasing numbers of refugee arrivals while not compromising security or creating unacceptable burdens at airports.

We are confident that these measures will help augment the number of refugee applications that we can process for FY 2003. The Department of Justice, as well as the INS, remains dedicated to its mission to aid the many individuals worldwide who are eager for an opportunity to join us in building our great nation. Please contact me if you have any further questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jamie E. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jamie E. Brown
Acting Assistant Attorney General